

This Article for Release November 16, 1987

Ag.File

Ag.File

Ag.File

By Peter Elzinga, Alberta Minister of Agriculture

TRADE MISSION TO THE PACIFIC RIM

In a recent column, I discussed the tremendous importance to Alberta's economy of our exports to the Pacific Rim. As I indicated, sales to Pacific Rim nations such as Japan, Korea, Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China are especially important to our agriculture industry. The Pacific Rim imports more than \$500 million worth of agricultural products from Alberta each year.

Last month, I joined the Honourable Larry Shaben, Minister of Economic Development and Trade, the Honourable LeRoy Fjordboten, Minister of Forestry, and the Honourable Rick Orman, Minister of Career Development and Employment on a major trade mission to the Pacific Rim. As government representatives, our job was to demonstrate to our hosts that Alberta exporters are committed to the Pacific Rim market, and that the Alberta Government fully supports their efforts.

My own primary responsibility, of course, was to let the government and business leaders of the countries I visited know that Alberta is a reliable exporter of the highest quality agricultural commodities and food products. In fulfilling that responsibility, I journeyed to our four most important agricultural markets in the Pacific Rim: Japan, Korea, the People's Republic of China and Hong Kong.

Japan is second only to the United States as an importer of Alberta agricultural products. Here, Alberta has placed special emphasis on promoting beef and canola, and on building close working relationships with major Japanese retailers as a means of further developing sales.

While in Japan, I met with offi-

cials in the Ministry of Agriculture to reinforce Alberta's standing as a consistent, reliable supplier of grains, oilseeds and beef, and to express our interest in establishing protocols for the sale to Japan of our cattle embryos, swine semen and hay products. In addition, I met with senior officials of Seiyu, a major Japanese department store. The Seiyu chain, which has been involved for the past few years in an employee exchange with Alberta Agriculture, is now planning a large-scale promotion of a full line of Alberta food products.

Also during this leg of the mission, I addressed major Alberta beef demonstrations in Tokyo and Osaka. The demonstrations, attended by some 200 of Japan's most important meat importers, were a great success. While in Osaka, I attended the opening of Nichiryu Stores Ltd.'s first "Canada Fair," which featured Alberta beef and canola oil.

Korea is an important market for such Alberta products as forage seeds, dehydrated alfalfa, canola seed and livestock genetics. While there, I presented a study fellowship to Korea's National Livestock Experiment Station, with whom Alberta Agriculture and the University of Alberta recently signed a special livestock research protocol. I also met with the Korean Ministry of Agriculture to express our strong interest in further liberalization of the regulations governing Korean importation of Alberta canola, dehydrated alfalfa, cattle and beef products.

Wheat makes up more than 90% of Alberta's agricultural exports to the People's Republic of China. While in China, I met with the Vice Minister, who indicated that, despite the availability of subsi-

dized wheat from the United States, his country intended to continue buying wheat from Canada in response to our high quality product and preferred status. In addition, I signed a new memorandum agreement with Chinese officials in our sister province, Heilongjiang, that will provide new trade opportunities for Alberta's private sector.

In Hong Kong, Alberta focuses on beef sales. While there, I hosted a beef presentation attended by 20 prominent Hong Kong hotel chefs, who were very impressed with the quality of our beef. In addition, I attended a luncheon presented by Dah Chong Hong, one of Hong Kong's largest trading companies, at which the company announced a new contract to purchase beef from an Alberta packer. Dah Chong Hong expressed their appreciation of Alberta Agriculture's help in developing the excellent relationship that exists between the company and Alberta suppliers.

The contacts, exposure and goodwill created during the trade mission will pay dividends to Albertans for a great many years to come. This 18-day tour planted the seed for long-term growth in export sales to some of our most important markets.

Alberta is vying with a great many others in our bid for a larger share of the lucrative, but highly competitive, Pacific Rim market. Albertans have reasonable prices, high-quality products and a good reputation on our side. It is extremely important to our province's economic future, however, that we create a solid relationship with the Pacific Rim's key players to promote expanded trade opportunities in the years ahead. I am confident that our trade mission has made a very positive contribution toward that goal.